

Developing a political narrative

A reminder: why people voted Labour in 1997

- Represented change
- In touch with the interests of ordinary, hard working people
- Prioritised public services, esp. the NHS and schools
- An end to sleaze
- Strong leadership

But Labour has not delivered

People feel let down and betrayed:

- Labour has become the establishment, representing what's wrong with Britain
- Out of touch with people's everyday concerns
- Wrong priorities – too much focus on overseas
- Reverting to form: “*they're all the same*”
- Broken promises and a lack of delivery.

Blair personifies this disillusionment

- Widespread loss of faith and belief in Blair
- Lies and spin – cannot be trusted
- Broken promises
- Out of touch
- Arrogant – does not listen
- Too focussed on overseas issues

This impacts on the future

Disillusionment with Blair is polluting all politics and politicians:

- Strong anti-politics sentiment
- Widespread scepticism, cynicism and mistrust – all promises are instinctively dismissed as “spin”

‘Disruption’ required – decisive break with the past: policies, personalities, event.

GB: strengths

- Stewardship of economy
- Honesty and integrity
- Strength of purpose
- Unspun and un-flashy: 'normal'
- Strong beliefs – 'the vision thing'
- Consistent approach – solid and reliable
- The Government's 'thinker' and 'doer'
- Known to disagree with TB on key issues (Iraq and top-up fees)

GB: limited knowledge

Very high awareness of GB, but limited knowledge.

- Only known for being Chancellor, therefore one-dimensional image: “*the numbers man*”. Due to subject matter perception of too much jargon
- Lack of knowledge about background, therefore false impressions created, e.g. some think he went to public school.

GB: weaknesses

Almost all driven by appearance at PMQs:

- Humourless
- Dour
- Moody
- Aggressive
- Unapproachable

GB: fears

Daily Mail reading, swing voters:

- Would he raise taxes?
- Would he be 'Old Labour'?
- Would he be too close to the unions?

GB: shaping perceptions

The more that is known about him, the more popular he becomes:

- Grounded: comes from ordinary background
- In touch: uses NHS and went to state school
- Clever – gifted child, rapid academic progress
- Integrity: does not use perks and grace-and-favour homes

Down to earth, and for 'the people'.

A different political style

- Values: believe in something
- On your side: relentless focus on what matters to people
- Honesty: an end to spin
- Delivery: set realistic goals and show progress
- Trust: keep promises, acknowledge mistakes
- In touch: ministers who are 'normal', esp. more women spokespeople

A different policy focus

- Stand up for Britain: put the domestic agenda first
- Renewed focus on public services – but in a way that connects
- Support communities and families, e.g affordable housing, childcare
- Clean up politics – restore trust and integrity to the political system

Characteristics of the 'ideal' PM

- Standing up for Britain and the British people
- Having vision, values and drive
- Being effective at getting things done
- Honesty and integrity in keeping promises
- Being 'in touch' with ordinary people
- Being accountable and open

Developing a narrative

- Refocus on Britain and the concerns of the British people
- Guided by values
- Build out of economic achievement
- Prioritise public services
- Strong families and communities
- Restoring trust and cleaning up politics

Next steps

- Develop and test political narrative
- Identify and test symbolic policies